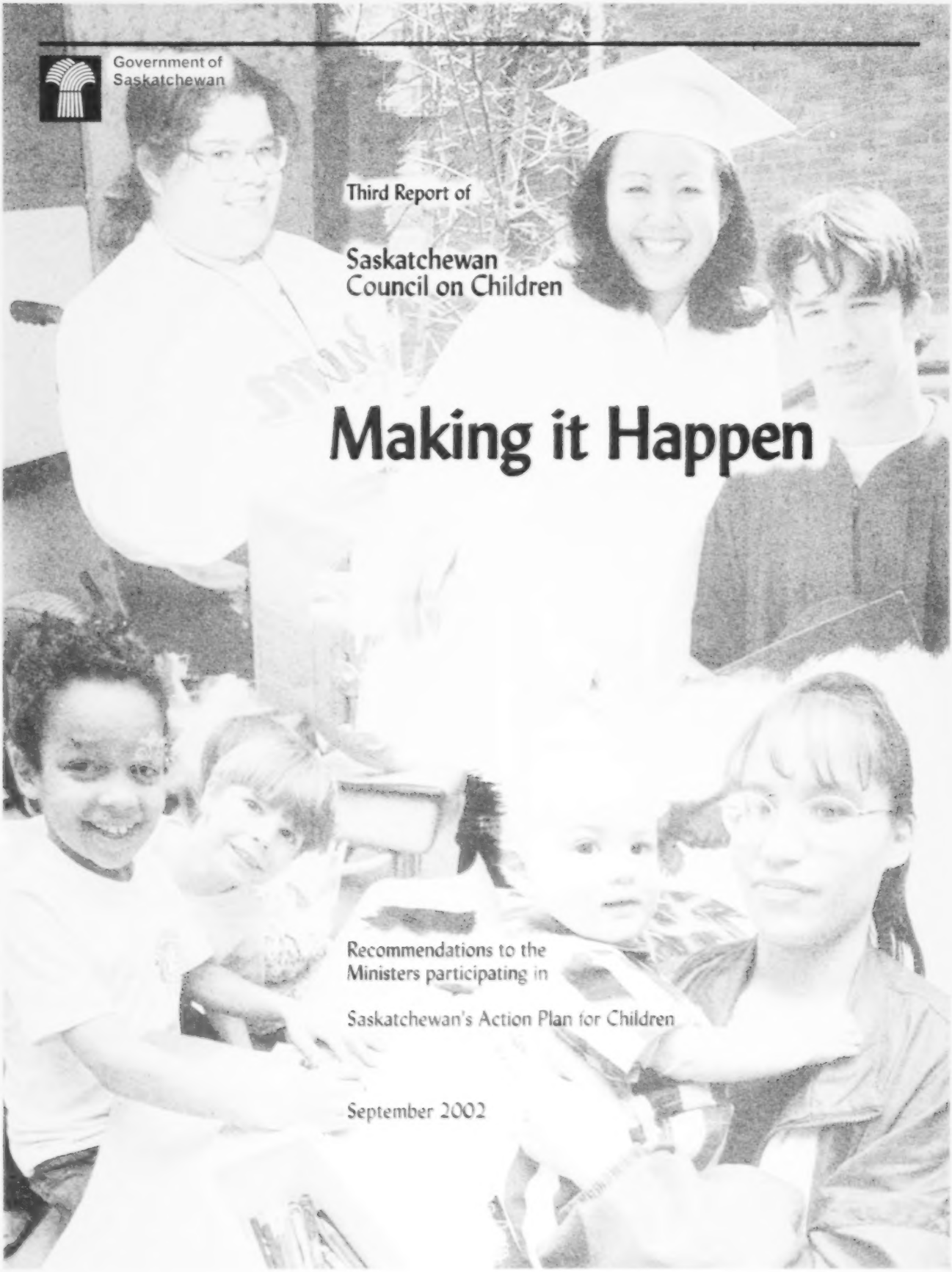

Government of Saskatchewan

Third Report of

Saskatchewan Council on Children

Making it Happen

Recommendations to the Ministers participating in

Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children

September 2002

103-02907/

Message from the Chair

Since 1994, the Saskatchewan Council on Children has provided a forum for discussion and advice to government in the areas of health, justice, education, recreation, housing, social services and other issues as they relate to the well-being of Saskatchewan children and youth.

The Council recommended priorities for action to the nine Ministers responsible for the *Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children* in its First Report in May 1995 and in its Second Report in October 1998.

I would like to thank previous and present Council members who volunteered their time to complete the two reports. Their hard work was recognized and greatly appreciated not only by the Council, but also by government through the actions taken on the recommendations provided in each of the Council reports.

This third report, *Making it Happen* will be the final report of this Council. Government has endorsed the Role of School Final Report and a reconstituted Council called the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth has been established to support implementation of *School*PLUS.

I would like to dedicate this report to the Government of Saskatchewan and current Council members as a concrete example of the value of partnerships and working together. I would also like to dedicate this report to all the past and present Council members who volunteered their time to make a difference in the lives of Saskatchewan children and youth.

I thank the Government of Saskatchewan for their insight and vision in creating *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* through which the Council was formed. The Council applauds the Ministers participating in the Action Plan for their commitment to the children, youth and families of the province, for their willingness to personally meet with Council members to hear their advice and for taking action on the recommendations provided.

The Interdepartmental Steering Committee for *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* has been an excellent resource and support for the Council over the years. Thank you to past and present Steering Committee members for your help in advancing the work of the Council. Brenda Szala has been key to keeping the Council coordinated and organized. Thank you, Brenda!

Over the last year, the present Council has met in different locations throughout Saskatchewan and spent many tireless hours to complete this report. Congratulations on *Making It Happen*!

For me, being part of the Council has been a rewarding experience. I feel I have benefited from having an excellent opportunity to really make a difference.

Greg Hatch, Chair
Saskatchewan Council on Children

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Executive Summary

In *Making it Happen*, this third report of The *Saskatchewan Council on Children* builds on our previous two reports, publicly released in 1995 and 1998. It supports the good work already under way led by government and communities to address the needs of children, youth and families and provides direction in the development of new child, youth and family initiatives. The recommendations provided to government in this report are the result of in-depth discussions among Council members, as well as a review of numerous government publications.

The recommendations are organized into four sections:

1. Synthesis of government reports;
2. Community engagement;
3. Strengthening families; and
4. Youth participation.

Within each section, specific recommendations are made to further advance our shared goals for children, youth and their families. In the first section, we suggest that government complete an analysis of the multitude of studies and reports commissioned over the last number of years to develop a coherent master plan to guide future public policy development and the delivery of human services for children, youth and families.

Historically, government has been challenged to engage communities in the process of implementing public policy. In the second section, the Council urges government to roll out important work such as the Human Service Handbook Series through the creation of implementation strategies and engagement of communities where public policy plays out in the delivery of human services. Recommendations focus on ensuring community voice and evaluating the outcomes of government-community partnerships.

In the third section, the Council proposes that one of the best ways to strengthen families is to ensure their basic needs for shelter, food security, social supports and learning are met. To increase the capacity of families to participate in their communities, the Council recommends that measures be introduced to ensure access to transportation, telephones, recreation and culture. Opportunities for skill development through volunteerism and the development of community support networks are viewed by the Council as an effective means for families, youth and children to share responsibility and build a sense of community ownership. Community volunteer networks require support and mentoring to build the capacity of its members. The Council calls on government to address the child care needs of families to facilitate access to life-long learning and employment and to address the developmental needs of children, particularly those most vulnerable to social and developmental delays.

Council builds on the recommendations contained in its second report and those from the Mind the Gap Youth Leadership Conference. The Council believes that youth require skills to take on leadership roles and participate in their communities. Adults require skills as well, to develop partnerships with youth and to recognize that youth are excellent resources, the experts on an array of youth issues. One of the ways in which youth can participate and stay connected with other youth and adults is through the creation of a youth web site. Success of a Saskatchewan youth web site is in part contingent upon access to computers, particularly for inner city, northern and urban youth. The Council also recommends that a concerted effort must be made to address the negative media portrayal of youth.

Three themes underpin each of the recommendations — capacity-building, strength-based supports and community involvement and partnerships. Building the capacity of families and communities, shifting from "fixing deficits" to employing strength-based approaches are key ingredients to building healthy families and successful communities. Making better use of community knowledge and resources, honouring community wisdom and mobilizing the capacity of communities to plan and make decisions about their own future builds shared ownership of issues and collective responsibility for the well-being of children, youth and families. Partnerships among community organizations, business, and government fosters the development of economic resources and delivery of appropriate, holistic and responsive services and programs for children, youth and families.

Introduction

The establishment of the Saskatchewan Council on Children began in 1994 with government's endorsement of *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children*, a provincial strategy to enhance the well-being of children, youth and families. The Council's broad mandate is to advise the Government of Saskatchewan and the Ministers participating in the Action Plan on priorities for achieving the well-being of Saskatchewan children and youth.

During its tenure, the Council has the opportunity to consult with many communities across the province and meet with key community service providers associated with *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children.* For example, in 2000, the Council investigated issues facing children, youth and families living in northern communities.

In 1995, the Council released its first report to Ministers involved in *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* containing 38 recommendations to address the needs of children, youth and their families. These recommendations were broadly-based relating to complex, multi-faceted problems such as poverty, violence and the rights of children requiring large-scale systemic change.

The Children's Council released its second report in 1998. In it, the Council selected particular issues to be targeted in policy and program development according to the three developmental stages of children and youth. For children from birth to five years of age, the report focused on the importance of young children getting a good start in life. The roles and responsibilities of public education formed the basis of the recommendations for children aged six to 12 years. Recommendations for youth centered on youth engagement and ensuring youth participation in decision-making, policy development and changing the negative public image of youth.

Each of the Council's two reports received broad public attention. They were circulated extensively throughout Saskatchewan communities and government and have been recognized nationally in research work. The recommendations in both reports were widely endorsed by government and have contributed to the development of such initiatives as, *Building Independence*, the Early Childhood Development Strategy — *Kids First* program, the Role of Schools Review *School*^{PLUS}, and the Mind the Gap Youth Leadership Symposium.

Launched in 1997, *Building Independence* is helping to reduce child and family poverty. By investing in lower-income families with children and providing opportunities and supports to move from welfare to the workforce, government is taking an active role in moving families toward economic independence. The second phase of *Building Independence* is underway. This important work will address barriers to families participating in the labour force in the areas of training and education, poor housing and accessible child care. Since the introduction of *Building Independence* and job opportunities in Saskatchewan, over 6,000 families and 13,000 children have left welfare and social assistance caseloads continue to decline.

Recognizing that the first five years of a child's life have the greatest impact on the child's future emotional and physical well-being, as well as the child's ability to contribute economically and socially to their community, government has initiated the *Kids First* program. Through *Kids First* a number of new programs and services targeting high-risk families and their children, prenatal to age five will be introduced in high-need communities. For example, all babies will be screened at birth to determine the challenges faced by their families and referred to the *Kids First* program if needed. Home visitors will provide intensive support to eligible families before and after the birth of their children through a home visitation program. Existing services in the province will be better coordinated to ensure greater accessibility and responsiveness.

Some of the anticipated outcomes of the *Kids First program* include: healthy birth weights for the babies; positive parent-child attachment; increased readiness for school; increased parental responsiveness to children; increased language and cognitive stimulation in the home; and fewer hospital/emergency room or physician visits regarding child accidents and injuries.

One of the key themes of the Council's Second Report was the role of public education in child development. The work of the government initiated Role of Schools Task Force seems to have "unpacked the chaos" associated with the current education system. The government's response — ***Securing Saskatchewan's Future: Ensuring the Well-being and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth*** and the implementation of *School*^{PLUS} marks an important paradigm shift in ensuring quality learning opportunities and the delivery of human services linked around the school.

One of the Council's priorities has been youth engagement and ensuring youth participation in decision-making and policy development. The Council, with the Provincial Youth Delegation and the Children's Advocate Office organized *Mind the Gap Provincial Youth Symposium* in November 2000, to give youth an opportunity to voice their issues and concerns. At this conference barriers to youth and adults working together were identified and discussed. A number of strategies were identified to address media portrayal of youth, to improve and facilitate open communication between adults and youth, to improve youth leadership and youth-adult partnerships. These strategies were published in the *Mind the Gap: Final Report*, November 18 to 20, 2000.

In this, the Council's third report, we focus our recommendations on how to support the above-noted work already underway and develop other child and youth-related initiatives. Our current recommendations are organized according to three interdependent priority areas for action and include community engagement, strengthening families and ensuring youth voice, along with an overarching recommendation to strengthen government planning.

Capacity-building, strength-based supports and community involvement and partnerships are the three thrusts that underpin each of our recommendations. Traditionally, approaches to addressing the problems of families and communities have focused on "fixing deficits". Another approach, favoured by the Council is to focus on capacity-building and the strengths of communities and families. Deficit-based

approaches create the perception that only experts can provide help and solve problems. Capacity-building and strength-based supports mobilize communities to address and resolve their own issues not as clients living on the margins, but as contributors to their neighbourhoods and communities. Resources can be used much more effectively when communities and families define the agenda and create their own solutions. It is through community involvement and partnerships that a shared responsibility for the well-being of families, youth and children is built.

The recommendations offered in this report are the result of in-depth discussions among council members (*see Appendix 1 for a list of Council members and areas of expertise*) as well as a review of several government publications. A partial listing of the more recent of these documents is contained in the references section of this report. Completing a review of government-sponsored reports and studies, along with the experience of Council members, culminated in an overarching recommendation for this report — conduct a synthesis of government reports. This recommendation sets the stage for recommendations on community engagement, strengthening families and ensuring youth voice.

Synthesis of Government Reports

1.1 Conduct a synthesis of government reports

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan conduct a review of significant existing reports, recommendations and responses. The intended outcome of this work would be to complete a thorough analysis and create a long-term action plan to guide public policy development and the delivery of human services for children, youth and families. The plan would need to be created in partnership with government departments and with communities, regularly reviewed, and renewed collaboratively with organizations and communities across the province.

Rationale: Over the past 10 years, both the provincial and federal governments have produced a large number of studies and reports with recommendations targeting children, youth and families. Examination of these documents reveals duplication of recommendations, contradictory recommendations, many diverse perspectives and responses. While it is important that government have many sources of information, the direction and priorities of government are not clear when there is a plethora of public reports. It is important for government to structure these multiple sources of information in ways that lead to coherent and transparent social policy.

Completing a meta-analysis of government reports would show relationships among various information sources, recommendations made and their overall relationship to public policy and action. With this knowledge, a long-term action plan can be developed. In this way, linkages would be more visible and service providers and the public could readily see where they fit into the plan.

Community Engagement

2.1 Develop implementation strategies

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan, in collaboration with community representatives, create a set of operational practices for the engagement of communities.

Rationale: Historically, government has been challenged with moving policy toward integrated delivery of programs and services at the community level. The Human Services Integration Forum, formerly the ADM's Forum, published the human service handbook series to create better local patterns of service delivery. An implementation plan did not accompany this work. The introduction of tools like integrated case management, interdisciplinary teams, interagency protocols and co-location of different disciplines have advanced the service integration process at the community level. However, there appears to be a rather independent relationship between policy planning at the departmental level, policy implementation leading to integrated service delivery models at the community level and community engagement. Many community groups and organizations are eager to be involved in public policy implementation — how things get done. The foundation for future partnerships between government and communities ought to be based on collaboration and active listening with clear opportunities for the engagement of a full range of community members.

2.2 Community voice needs to be systematically represented

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan partner with non-government agencies and community citizens in developing criteria to set priorities and resource allocation.

Rationale: Many smaller rural and northern communities, as well as urban centres in the province have become engaged in sustainable community planning processes to determine their vision for the future in the context of economic, social and environmental well-being. The community acts on the vision by developing projects that address self-identified issues. Resources and supports are needed for capacity-building and sustained partnerships and programs within communities.

The participation of community organizations and citizens would make a valuable contribution to the decision-making processes of Regional Intersectoral Committees (RIC's) regarding services that should be available and how they are organized.[1] This would move the integration agenda closer to the grass roots level and would provide community members with access to decision-makers. Systematically ensuring community voice in forums like the RIC's adds legitimacy to the integration agenda, encourages more responsive service delivery and contributes to the development of all the participants in the process.

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[1] *Nine Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC's) from across the province identify community needs and plan integrated service delivery at the regional and local level. Regional Intersectoral Committees are for the most part comprised of members from regional government departments and local authorities like health districts, school divisions, police, municipalities, housing authorities, regional colleges and to some extent Aboriginal organizations. One of their major tasks of the RIC's is the local review and coordination of a variety of project-based funds such as Prevention and Support Grants, the Community Initiatives Fund, Federal Population Health, National Crime Prevention and Family Literacy grants. The RIC's also identify community agencies that might benefit from various grants and encourage "partnerships" to effect more comprehensive, and coordinated services for vulnerable children, youth and families.*

Reflection Questions to Guide Community Engagement

- What are the underlying concerns of government regarding partnership with community?
- What are the underlying concerns of community regarding partnership with government?
- What projects are working and how have they been set up?
- What mechanisms for community/government partnership are known to be successful?
- What are the legal constraints and responsibilities regarding sharing decision-making authority?
- How can shared authority be operationalized at all levels?
- What legislative or policy changes would be required to redistribute authority?
- How can government engage First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples? What could be done to build on successful models?
- Can this learning be applied to other groups or situations?

2.3 Evaluate progress

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan, with community, develop a process to evaluate the outcomes of government-community partnerships.

Rationale: For approximately the last 10 years, there has been an emphasis on working together and partnerships to improve the delivery of human services and ensure better outcomes for Saskatchewan citizens. While partnerships have become part of the landscape little is known about the extent to which clients or consumers experience greater ability to access needed services or experience enhanced well-being. Evaluation of the outcomes of government and community partnerships would make an important contribution to the knowledge base needed for the development and implementation of new programs and the identification of best practices.

Strengthening Families

All families have strengths, moving in and out of vulnerability over time and as their circumstances change. Families can best be strengthened when their basic needs for housing, food, social supports and learning are met. A continuum of services from birth to adulthood with smooth transitions through the developmental life cycle is required to improve outcomes for families and their children. Programs must be holistically planned around the needs of the whole family based on the principles of accessibility, flexibility and responsiveness.

"Many families who depend on low rental housing may move four or five times or more in one year. A major reason for this is inadequate affordable housing."

from: Telling It Like It Is Realities of Parenting in Poverty

3.1 Address the housing needs of families

"Increase support and promote social housing programs in inner city and northern communities for low-income families."

from: Organizing Our Healthy Community, Keewatin Yatthe Health District

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan develop a housing strategy to address the increasing demand for quality, accessible and affordable housing for low-income families. The strategy should proactively support greater social housing development. Changing and or broadening legislation to assist public health inspectors in their attempts to clean up rental properties would also support families in their search for quality housing.

"The average student may lose up to three months with each change of school."

Rationale: Good housing is the foundation of neighbourhoods and communities, vital to the healthy development of children and youth. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), approximately 46,000 Saskatchewan households were affected by lack of affordable, adequate and suitable housing, in 1996. Populations with housing problems are typically low-income families concentrated in deteriorating inner city neighbourhoods, small communities and the north. In an effort to secure housing many low-income families frequently relocate. Out of necessity, their transience limits their ability to secure and maintain employment, contributes to their social isolation and detracts from their active community involvement and support. Their children, without the stability, of a home frequently transfer schools negatively impacting on their academic adjustment and school success.

3.2 Ensure food security

Barring volume sales rebates and brand price differences the price of milk, bread and eggs varies across the province while the price of liquor is standardized. For example, in the far north, milk can cost up to $12.00 or more for four litres of 2%; Naicam, $4.47 and Saskatoon, $3.29 or $3.6 depending on brand used.

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan develop a provincial strategy, in partnership with communities and businesses, to promote food security. The strategy should include:

- continuing the development of food programs such as community gardens, community buying, collective kitchens, baby food workshops and school nutrition programs;
- addressing issues of availability of low-cost nutritious foods;
- working toward a more sustainable food system; and
- recognizing that pre-conception, prenatal and post-natal needs of women are key to healthy early childhood development.

"Every month we struggle to eat, let alone pay the bills; you end up spending most of your grocery money on rent unless you are in subsidized housing".

from: Telling It Like It Is: Realities of Parenting In Poverty

Rationale: At the present time, food security programs are funded and supported in a very ad hoc fashion. Comprehensive strategies would help provide individuals and families with equitable access to sound nutritional practices. Many families have some knowledge of good nutritional practices but cannot afford to meet these requirements on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. With regular monthly payments for such necessities as rent, utility bills and other expenses, money set aside for food can often be redirected. As a result, families settle for cheaper, less nutritious foods or go hungry.

3.3 Promote the social inclusion of families in communities through enhanced access to transportation, telephones, recreation and culture.

"You have to make decisions about what is most important, whether paying your phone or eating is more important, or whether you need milk or to do a load of laundry".

from: Telling It Like It Is: Realities of Parenting in Poverty

Recommendation: To increase the capacity of families to participate in their communities, measures must be introduced to reduce barriers and ensure access to transportation, telephones, recreation, and cultural activities. Strengthening families living on the margins requires, the Government of Saskatchewan to:

- conduct a review of public transportation to ensure sustainability, greater innovation and access by low-income families, in partnership with consumer groups, school divisions, municipal and urban governments;
- evaluate SaskTel's telephone access program for low-income families; and
- enhance recreational and cultural programs in high-need neighbourhoods to provide families and their children with greater opportunities to learn and develop important physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social skills. This is especially important for socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth.

Rationale: Accessible and affordable public transportation enables lower-income families to gain and sustain employment, access child care, purchase reasonably-priced groceries, attend medical appointments and participate in recreation, cultural activities and various other community programs and services.

Innovations like "kids ride free with an adult" in urban areas and using school buses in rural areas on weekends, for example, would facilitate greater involvement of families in various family and community activities.

Telephone access is an essential service for families for health and safety reasons. Schools and clinics, for example, rely on telephones to communicate information and appointments to parents. Families rely on telephones to access emergency services. Unfortunately, even after a successful program of phone accessibility with SaskTel, many lower income families have lost their phones when money had to be redirected to other expenses.

"I like the work I can do here, but I don't care to live here, to raise my girls there. There's a lot of crime, broken beer bottles, needles, perverts driving by".

from: Telling It Like It Is: Realities of Parenting In Poverty

Many disadvantaged families, youth and children are often not involved in any form of organized sport, recreational or cultural activities outside the school. Some of the factors that limit their access relate to the costs of programs and equipment, distance and the absence of good parks, playground facilities and safe play spaces in neighbourhoods. To increase participation in sport, recreation and culture, existing recreational spaces such as schools and parks must be made more accessible to families.

3.4 Promote community giving and capacity-building

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan continue to recognize the value of volunteerism in building the capacity of individuals, families and communities by working with communities and businesses to develop strategies and supports for volunteer networks.

Rationale: Some key benefits of volunteerism are skill development and building and sustaining community support networks. Volunteerism is an excellent way for families, children and youth to learn responsibility, a sense of community ownership, build self-confidence and explore career options. Volunteers require opportunities for mentoring, support and continual skill development, rather than one-time workshops.

One way to recognize the value of volunteerism is to develop a system of educational credits toward life skill courses, high school work experience or practicum requirements.

3.5 Accessible child care

"High quality, affordable child care that meet parents' standards, including care by a relative"

from: Telling It Like It Is: Realities of Parenting in Poverty

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan continue to promote a range of formal and informal quality child day care options for children.

"Increase resources devoted nationally, provincially, and locally to provide a variety of high quality child care services that are affordable and acceptable to parents".

from: We did it Together, 2001

Rationale: The availability and affordability of quality child care are significant barriers to parents, particularly lone-parent families accessing education, training and employment opportunities. Parents, not only in urban but in rural and northern areas, have difficulty locating child care that meets their needs. Infant care, for example, is often not provided in the same facility as toddler and preschool care. Many lower-income parents cannot afford child care in the licensed sector even with the availability of child care subsidies. Many First Nations and Aboriginal families prefer child care arrangements that respect their traditions and child rearing practices. Quality child care is also an important factor in healthy early childhood development. Access to affordable, quality child care is critical in high need situations where children are more vulnerable to social and developmental delays.

Youth Participation

The youth participation recommendations are a direct result of the second report of the Saskatchewan Council on Children and the Mind the Gap Youth Conference. The second report of the Children's Council included several recommendations focusing on the need to increase youth participation in decision making and policy development. The Mind the Gap Youth Conference was initiated as a result of these recommendations. Through collaboration and adult-youth partnerships it has become clear to the Council, youth universally want to participate in their communities but do not have the tools to do so. A number of recommendations concerning the well-being of youth were published in the Mind the Gap Final Report. In reviewing this report, the Council identified three distinct areas requiring further action on the part of government to support youth participation, namely:

"Youth empowerment is about young people having some control over the issues that affect them, not about handing down opportunities as a quick fix".

A. youth participation skills;
B. ensuring youth have access to information; and
C. attitudes respecting youth.

4.1 Don't talk about us without us – ensuring youth participation and leadership

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan support and promote the training of youth and adults to partner in their communities and with business, community organizations and government. Government employees and organizations working with youth require training to communicate and work with youth effectively. Training must be done as a partnership, with youth and adult participation.

Rationale: Saskatchewan youth are asking for a voice in decision-making processes by being active participants. Unfortunately, there are many barriers that prevent adults and youth from working together. Both adults and youth need skills to ensure success at working together. Adults need to learn more about the contribution youth can make in 'youth talking about youth needs.' Some of the ways to facilitate youth participation and leadership in organizations include: the use of adult mentors; the inclusion of more than one youth position on boards and committees; and building youth leadership training into school curriculum. Addressing practical barriers to youth participation such as money, transportation and scheduling of meetings would also contribute to youth involvement.

- Representation by a minimum of 2 youth within an organization is required to facilitate youth voice — one youth alone is not sufficient;
- Youth should be involved for the entire duration of a process, not just when it is most convenient — no token participation;
- Facilitate youth participation and leadership in organizations through youth leadership conferences and workshops;
- Offer youth worthwhile jobs to perform – ensure equality;
- Recognize that all youth do not have the same needs;
- Commit to focus on the strengths of vulnerable youth, not their weaknesses;
- Youth need ongoing support, not just one shot training events;
- Promote adult and youth mentorship.

4.2 Create a youth web site

Recommendation: To ensure youth have access to information, the Government of Saskatchewan, spearheaded by the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, prioritize the creation of a youth initiated web site. The web site must appeal to youth and should include characteristics such as music components or links. A youth employment position to design, and maintain the web site needs to be created and a commitment must be made to ensure access to computers for inner city, urban, rural and northern youth. The goals of the web site would be to:

A. engage youth;

B. facilitate and enable youth to access information on youth services;

C. build youth resources, networks and supports; and

D. facilitate communication between youth with communities, businesses, government and other youth.

Rationale: Saskatchewan is a province with significant rural and remote populations scattered over a large geographic area. The Internet is a useful single point of contact that enables youth to connect with other youth and adults to gain information and access to resources. For example, a Saskatchewan youth web site would serve as a mechanism to list conferences, advertise employment, volunteer and training opportunities, recognize the accomplishments of youth, list speakers on youth issues, encourage adult and youth dialogue and feature youth resources and support services.

- Create a central "hub" to enable youth to connect to all youth programs and resources in Saskatchewan;
- Create a web page that lists youth conferences and contacts;
- Create a "speakers bureau" which lists speakers on youth issues;
- Include a rights in the workplace page;
- Incorporate a "Youth of the Month" feature;
- Include an employment available page;

  Create a youth "volunteer positions available" data base;
- Feature youth resources available;
- Poll youth on issues affecting youth each month and post the information gathered;
- Provide links to programs and support services for vulnerable youth;
- Post existence of the web site at schools, libraries, resource centres and mental health offices.

4.3 Address the negative media portrayal of youth

Recommendation: To address attitudes about youth, the Government of Saskatchewan develop incentives for the media to recognize the positive contributions made by youth in their communities and provide funding to support youth initiated media activities.

Rationale: The media provides many powerful messages about youth and all too often these messages are very negative. Some of the ways in which to support the active participation of youth in their communities and promote positive media messages include:

A. emulate the Regina Leader Post, "Under 20" format and create youth newspaper columns in other daily and weekly newspapers;

B. incorporate youth reporters as newscasters in news events;

C. create public service announcements related to youth and positive youth initiatives;

D. introduce awards for accurate newspaper, radio and television reporting on youth which would be assessed and awarded by a review board comprised of youth;

E. involve the Weekly Newspaper Association in the creation of a youth achievement section highlighting the accomplishments of youth; and

F. create a government-sponsored program for youth internships within media communication companies.

- Youth need training on how to speak to the media;
- Youth need training to learn how to "tell their story;"
- Use the media to educate the media about youth;
- Replicate the programming efforts of the Missinippi Broadcasting Corporation and the Missinippi Youth Foundation, affiliates of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), who are involved in positive youth initiatives.

Conclusion

The recommendations made in this report continue to build on the Council's two previous reports and the progress made in such government-led initiatives as, *Building Independence* and *Kids First*, this province's early childhood development strategy. In *Making It Happen*, recommendations made to the Ministers responsible for *Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children* focus on strengthening government planning and building the capacity of families, youth and communities. Building the capacity of communities and families requires government to shift its role from asking communities to participate in government-led initiatives to supporting local people in problem solving and investing in community-driven solutions. Youth are essential contributors to building healthy communities and should be given meaningful opportunities to participate.

With government's endorsement of the Role of School Final Report the current Council will be reconstituted as the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth to support implementation of *School*^{PLUS}. *School*^{PLUS} marks the beginning of significant change in how we work together to support children and families in our province. Council is optimistic that this new model of service delivery with schools as the hub will be an effective means to ensure that the learning needs of every child and young person are met. Linking human services to schools will enhance the capacity of community and government to plan and collaborate more effectively around the needs of children and youth.

Synthesis of Government Reports

1.1 Conduct a synthesis of government reports

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan conduct a review of significant existing reports, recommendations and responses. The intended outcome of this work would be to complete a thorough analysis and create a long-term action plan to guide public policy development and the delivery of human services for children, youth and families. The plan would need to be created in partnership with government departments and with communities, regularly reviewed, and renewed collaboratively with organizations and communities across the province.

Community Engagement

2.1 Develop implementation strategies

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan, in collaboration with community representatives, create a set of operational practices for the engagement of communities.

2.2 Community voice needs to be systematically represented

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan partner with non-government agencies and community citizens in developing criteria to set priorities and resource allocation.

2.3 Evaluate progress

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan, with community, develop a process to evaluate the outcomes of government-community partnerships.

Strengthening Families

3.1 Address the housing needs of families

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan develop a housing strategy to address the increasing demand for quality, accessible and affordable housing for low-income families. The strategy should proactively support greater social housing development. Changing and/or broadening legislation to assist public health inspectors in their attempts to clean up rental properties would also support families in their search for quality housing.

3.2 Ensure food security

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan develop a provincial strategy, in partnership with communities and businesses, to promote food security. The strategy should include:

- continuing the development of food programs such as community gardens, community buying, collective kitchens, baby food workshops and school nutrition programs;
- addressing issues of availability of low-cost nutritious foods;
- working toward a more sustainable food system;
- recognizing that pre-conception, prenatal and post-natal needs of women are key to healthy early childhood development.

3.3 Promote the social inclusion of families in communities through enhanced access to transportation, telephones, recreation and culture.

Recommendation: To increase the capacity of families to participate in their communities measures must be introduced to reduce barriers and ensure access to transportation, telephones, recreation, and cultural activities. Strengthening families living on the margins requires, the Government of Saskatchewan to:

- conduct a review of public transportation to ensure sustainability, greater innovation and access by low-income families, in partnership with consumer groups, school divisions and municipal and urban governments;
- evaluate SaskTel's telephone access program for low-income families; and
- enhance cultural and recreational programs in high-need neighbourhoods to provide families and their children with greater opportunities to learn and develop important physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social skills. This is especially important for socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth.

3.4 Promote community giving and capacity-building

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan continue to recognize the value of volunteerism in building the capacity of individuals, families and communities by working with communities and businesses to develop strategies and supports for volunteer networks.

3.5 Accessible child care

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan continue to promote a range of formal and informal quality child day care options for children.

Youth Participation

4.1 Don't talk about us without us – ensuring youth participation and leadership

Recommendation: The Government of Saskatchewan support and promote the training of youth and adults to partner in their communities and with business, community organizations and government. Government employees and organizations working with youth require training to communicate and work with youth effectively. Training must be done as a partnership, with youth and adult participation.

4.2 Create a youth web site

Recommendation: To ensure youth have access to information, the Government of Saskatchewan, spearheaded by the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, prioritize the creation of a youth initiated web site. The web site must appeal to youth and should include characteristics such as music components or links. A youth employment position to design, and maintain the web site would be created and a commitment must be made to ensure access to computers for inner city, urban rural and northern youth. The goals of the web site would be to:

A. engage youth;
B. facilitate and enable youth to access information on youth services;
C. build youth resources, networks and supports; and
D. facilitate communication between youth with communities, businesses, government and other youth.

4.3 Address the negative media portrayal of youth

Recommendation: To address attitudes about youth, the Government of Saskatchewan develop incentives for the media to recognize the positive contributions made by youth in their communities and provide funding to support youth initiated media activities.

Appendix I

Saskatchewan Council on Children

Council Member	Expertise and Interests	Location
Greg Hatch, Chair	• Principal, La Loche Community School • Sport and recreation; youth involvement.	La Loche
Jordan Anderson Vice-Chair	• Student, University of Saskatchewan, Public Administration • Politics; audio/visual and computer science	Weyburn
Kathy Dammann	• Counselor, Violence Intervention Program • Learning disabilities, Local School Board	Griffin
Elizabeth Benson	• Saskatoon Sexual Assault and Information Centre	Saskatoon
Rosemary Bolaria	• Research Officer, Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps	Saskatoon
Sandra Brown	• Manager, Lloydminster Métis Housing Group, Inc.	Lloydminster
Marlene Bugler	• Executive Director, Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services Inc. • 15 years as a foster parent	Battleford
Hector (LeRoy) Bunnie	• Works part-time while attending school at SIAST Learning Centre • Involved with Youth in Care (Saskatchewan)	Prince Albert
Roberta Burns	• Mayoyawin Children's Visiting Program • Recipient, YWCa women of Distinction Award	Prince Albert
Leslie Christianson	• Coordinated Behaviour Management Consultant, Tri-District Mental Health	Naicam
Germaine Coates	• Rainbow Youth Centre • Aboriginal Justice	Fort Qu'Appelle
Amanda Doucette (Education, Youth)	• Student, 1st year Psychology, University of Saskatchewan • Coordinator, Provincial Youth Delegation	Saskatoon
Leonard Haines	• Professor of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, Education of Exceptional Children	Saskatoon
Cheryl Hand	• Community Outreach Nurse, West Side Community Clinic • concerned about child poverty	Saskatoon
Neetu Khanna	• Student, University of Saskatchewan (Geography) • Circle on Youth Sexuality (Youth Leader)	Saskatoon
Diane Martz	• Director, Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment • Term Instructor and Sessional Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon
Amanda Quayle	• Solicitor, McDougall, Gauley	Regina
Gerald Roy	• Youth Programming Development Coordinator, Keewatin Yatthe Health District • Instrumental in establishment of Junior Council and Youth Centre in the community.	Ile-a-la-Crosse
Christa Shepherd	• Student, University of Saskatchewan (Arts & Science)	Saskatoon
Nicole Stenerson	• Student, University of Regina (Music) • Has done extensive work as ballet/dance accompanist.	Regina
Donna Upshall	• Speech/language Pathologist, Child and Youth Services • Current involvement in national initiative to enhance preschool children's language/ cognitive development.	Regina
Shelley Hoover	• Assistant Deputy Minister (Policy)	Regina
Rosanne Glass	• Director, Planning ad Community Education Unit	Regina
Joe Kluger	• Director, Child and Youth Services	Regina
Deb Parker-Loewen	• Children's Advocate	Saskatoon

Appendix 2

Comprehensive List of Council Members

Council Member	Location	Date of Service
Sharon Agecoutay	Regina	March 1994 - April 1997
Jordan Anderson	Weyburn	May 2001 - present
Virgil Awasis	Saskatoon	March 1994 - March 1995
Sarah Ballantyne	Deschambault Lake	March 1994 - April 1997
John Barton	Saskatoon	March 1994 - March 2001
Lonnie Bazar	Saskatoon	March 1994 - March 1995
Kimberly Joseph Beaudin	Saskatoon	February 1998 - March 2001
Elizabeth Benson	Prince Albert and Saskatoon	September 2000 - present
Rosemary Bolaria	Saskatoon	April 1997 - present
Sandra Brown	Moose Jaw	May 2001 - present
Marlene Bugler	Cando	April 1997 - present
Roberta Burns	Prince Albert	April 1997 - present
Virginia Carpenter	Grey	July 1999 - March 2001
Germaine Coates	Fort Qu'Appelle	April 1999 - present
Kathy Dammann	Griffin	March 1994 - present
Norm Doell	Saskatoon	March 1994 - April 1997
Amanda Doucette	Saskatoon	May 2001 - present
Darlene Domshy	Regina	July 1999 - March 2001
Jason Dubois	Rosetown	March 1994 - April 1997
Norma Jean Dubray-Byrd	Regina	March 1994 - April 1997
Bonnie Durnford	Regina	February 1998 - March 2001
Deanna Elias-Henry	Regina	March 1994 - March 2001
Jim Faulkner	Regina	April 1999 - July 1999
Rosanne Glass	Regina	April 1999 - present
Carol Glazer	Saskatoon	March 1994 - December 2001
Len Haines	Saskatoon	May 2001 - present
Cheryl Hand	Saskatoon	April 1997 - present
Greg Hatch	La Loche	March 1994 - present
Dr. Deb Hay	Saskatoon	March 1994 - June 2001
Donna Heselwood	Dillon	May 2001 - present
John Hiebert	Watrous	September 1997 - March 1999
John Hiebert	La Loche	September 2000 - December 2001
Daina Hodgson	Moose Jaw	May 1997 - September 2000
Shelley Hoover	White City	May 2001 - present
Alphonse Janvier	Patuanak	March 1994 - March 2001
Neetu Khanna	Saskatoon	May 2001 - present
Dr. Joe Kluger	Regina	March 1995 - present
Jason Koochicum	Regina	July 1999 - March 2001
Doug Lang	Kindersley	April - September 1997
Anne Luke	Regina	April 1997 - March 1999
Elaine Malbeuf	Beauval	March 1994 - April 1997
Diane Martz	Saskatoon	May 2001 - present
Dr. Bob McCulloch	Regina	March 1994 - February 1998
Don McKay	La Ronge	March 1994 - April 1997
Brennan Merasty	Ile-a-la-Crosse	May - September 2001
Marg Monson	Moose Jaw	September 1995 - March 1999
Charmaine Nelson	Fort Qu'Appelle	March 1994 - April 1997
Walker Prior	Saskatoon	March 1994 - March 1995
Amanda Quayle	Regina	September 2000 - present
Linda Reiss	La Ronge and Elbow	April 1999 - March 2001
Pamela Roberts	Regina	March 1994 - September 2000
Kim Ross	Saskatoon	March 1994 - April 1997
Jan Rowlinson	Moose Jaw	March 1994 - March 2001
Gerald Roy	Ile-a-la-Crosse	May 2001 - present
Aaron Schroeder	Muenster	April 1997 - March 2001
Christa Shepherd	Saskatoon	May 2001 - present
Nicole Stenerson	Regina	May 2001 - present
Carol Thomson	Regina	July 1999 - September 2000
Donna Upshall	Regina	April 1999 - present
Christine Watson	Regina	April 1997 - March 1999
Shirley Werezak	Prince Albert	March 1994 - March 1995
Alma Wiebe	Saskatoon	March 1994 - September 2000
Neil Yeates	Regina	March 1995 - June 1997

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